The
Pagan
Library

History of Witchcraft

Anon

As I am trying to put this all together, I hope to bring about an understanding that Witchcraft, like any religion, has undergone it's changes throughout the centuries. It is my personal feeling, however, that the religion of Witchcraft has undergone far fewer changes than any other in history.

As the song sung by Neil Diamond starts:

> "Where it began, I can't begin to knowin..."

Witchcraft, sorcery, magic, whatever can only begin to find its roots when we go back as far as Mesopotamia. With their deities for all types of disasters, such as Utug - the Dweller of the Desert waiting to take you away if you wandered to far, and Telal - the Bull Demon, Alal - the destroyer, Namtar - Pestilence, Idpa - fever, and Maskim - the snaresetter; the days of superstition were well underway.

It was believed that the pharaohs, kings, etc. all imbued some power of the gods, and even the slightest movement they made would cause an action to occur. It was believed that a picture, or statue also carried the spirit of the person. This is one of the reasons that they were carried from place to place, and also explains why you see so many pictures and statues of these persons with their hands straight to their sides.

In the Bible, we find reference to "The Tower of Babel" or The Ziggurat in Genesis 11. "Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar (Babylonia) and settled there. They said to each other, `Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly.' They used brick instead of stone, and tar instead of mortar. Then they said, `Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.' But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, `If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.'" It goes on to say that the tower was never finished.

In other references, we find that the "Tower" was in fact finished, and that it was a tower that represented the "stages" between earth and heaven (not a tower stretching to the heaven in the literal sense.) From this reference, it was a tower built in steps. A hierarchy on which heaven and hell were based. It was actually a miniature world representing the Mountain of Earth.

Each stage was dedicated to a planet, with its angles symbolizing the four corners of the world. They pointed to Akkad, Saburtu, Elam, and the western lands. The seven steps of the tower were painted in different colors which corresponded to the planets. The "Great Misfortune:, Saturn, was black. The second was white, the color of Jupiter. The third, brick-red, the color of Mercury, followed by blue, Venus; yellow, Mars, gray or silver for the moon. These colors boded good or evil, like their planets.

For the first time, numbers expressed the world order. A legend depicts Pythagoras traveling to Babylon where he is taught the mystery of numbers, their magical significance and power. The seven steps often appear in magical philosophy. The seven steps are: stones, fire, plants, animals, man, the starry heavens, and the angels. Starting with the study of stones, the man of wisdom will attain higher and higher degrees of knowledge, until he will be able to apprehend the sublime, and the eternal. Through ascending these steps, a man would attain the knowledge of God, whose name is at the eighth degree, the threshold of God's heavenly dwelling.

The square was also a "mystical" symbol in these times, and though divided into seven, was still respected. This correlated the old tradition of a fourfold world being reconciled with the seven heavens of later times.

It is thought that here was the start to numerology, but for this to have developed to the point where they had taken into consideration the square as the fourfold world, it would have had to have developed prior to this.

From Mesopotamia lets move over to Persia.

Unlike the Mesopotamians, and Egyptians, who believed that all was done with either the favor or lack thereof of the Gods, the Chaldean star religion taught that luck and disaster were no chance events, but were controlled from the heavenly bodies (planets/stars) which send good and bad according to mathematical laws. It was their belief that man was incapable of fighting the will of the planet divinities. Though, the more this system evolved, the more the wise men read ethical values into man's fate. The will of the stars was not completely separate from man's behaviors. The stars were important, but not omnipotent in deciding man's fate. It was believed that the star Sirius would carry messages to the higher gods and he returned to announce their will.

Around the 7th Century BC Zoroaster, the Median prophet was preaching the doctrines that evil could be avoided and defeated. He brought about the principles of the good and evil spirits. Below, we will look at the beliefs and influences of this man's life which created the religion named after him.

The first of the belief structure had to do with Ormazd (Ahura-Mazda) king of light, and his twin brother Ahriman (Anro-Mainyu) prince of darkness.

Zoroaster brought about the belief in the "holy war" (that between good and evil.) In this faith, the archangels (the spirits of Divine Wisdom, Righteousness, Dominion, Devotion, Totality, and Salvation) and the demons (the spirits of Anarchy, Apostasy, Presumption, Destruction, Decay, and Fury) were constantly at battle with one another. The archangels were controlled by Ormazd and the demons by Ahriman.

This religion had it's belief that in the end, Ormazd and his demons would prevail, but until then, Ormazd would keep the world safe.

It is interesting that the last of the demons (the demon of Fury) holds such a hard and fast thought that it was incorporated into the Hebrew and Christian belief structure. The last arch-demon's name is Aeshma Daeva also know to the Hebrews as Ashmadai and to Christians as Asmodeus.

Asmodeus was the "chief of the fourth hierarchy of evil demons", called "the avengers of wickedness, crimes and misdeeds." He appears with three heads, a bull's, human, and a ram. He has goose feet, and a snake's tail. To appear more frightening, he also exhales fire and rides upon a dragon of hell.

It is said that Asmodeus is not to be feared. When you say to him: "In truth thou art Asmodeus," he will give you a wonderful ring. He will teach you geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and mechanics. When questioned, he answers truthfully.

The other demons tempt people away from the true worship of Mazda. They are Paromaiti - Arrogance, Mitox - The Falsely Spoken Word, Zaurvan - Decrepitude, Akatasa - Meddlesomeness, Vereno - Lust.

Much of the current day Christian beliefs were taken from this man's religion. (That of good and evil forces, the redemption, the "savior" factor, etc.)

From here, let us move on to Egypt where we will look at other mystical symbols and more history of magic and the craft.

The Sphinx was a mythological creature with lion's body and human head, an important image in Egyptian and Greek art and legend. The word sphinx was derived by Greek grammarians from the verb sphingein (to bind or squeeze), but the etymology is not related to the legend and is dubious.

The winged sphinx of Boeotian Thebes, the most famous in legend, was said to have terrorized the people by demanding the answer to a riddle. If the person answered incorrectly, he or she was eaten by the sphinx. It is said that Oedipus answered properly where upon the sphinx killed herself.

The earliest and most famous example in art is the colossal Sphinx at Giza, Egypt. It dates from the reign of King Khafre (4th king of 4th dynasty; c. 2550 BC.)

The Sphinx did not occur in Mesopotamia until around 1500 BC. when it was imported from the Levant. In appearance, the Asian sphinx differed from its Egyptian model mostly in the addition of wings to the leonine body. This feature continued through its history in Asia and the Greek world.

Another version of the sphinx was that of the female. This appeared in the 15th century BC. on seals, ivories and metalworkings. They were portrayed in the sitting position usually with one paw raised. Frequently, they were seen with a lion, griffin or another sphinx.

The appearance of the sphinx on temples and the like eventually lead to a possible interpretation of the sphinx as a protective symbol as well as a philosophical one.

The Sphinx rests at the foot of the 3 pyramids of Khufu, Khafre, and Menkure. It talons stretch over the city of the dead as it guards its secrets.

The myth goes that a prince who later became Thutmose IV, took a nap in the shadow of the half-submerged Sphinx. As he slept, the Sun-god (whom the Sphinx represents, appeared to him in a dream. Speaking to him as a son, he told the prince that he would succeed to the throne and enjoy a long and happy reign. He urged the prince to have the Sphinx cleared of the sand.

In his book on Isis and Osiris, Plutarch (AD 45-126) says that the Sphinx symbolizes the secret of occult wisdom, though Plutarch never unveiled the mysteries of the Sphinx. It is said that the magic of the Sphinx lies within the thousands of hands that chiseled at the rock. The thoughts of countless generations dwell in it; numberless conjurations and rites have built up in it a mighty protective spirit, a soul that still inhabits this time-scarred giant.

Another well know superstition of the peoples of Ancient Egypt was that regarding their dead.

They believed that in the West lies the World of the Dead, where the Sun-god disappears every evening. The departed were referred to as "Westerners." It was believed that, disguised as birds, the dead soar into the sky where in his heavenly barge Ra, the Sun- god, awaits them and transforms them into stars to travel with him through the vault of the heavens.

The cult of the dead reached it's height when it incorporated the Osiris myth. Osiris was born to save mankind. At his nativity, a voice was heard proclaiming that the Lord had come into the world (sound familiar?). But his brother/father Seth shut him up in a chest which he carried to the sea by the Tanaitic mouth of the Nile. Isis brought him back to life. Seth then scattered his body all over the place. It is said that Isis fastened the limbs together with the help of the gods Nephtis, Thoth, and Horus, her son. Fanning the body with her wings, and through her magic, Osiris rose again to reign as king over the dead.

The Egyptian believed that a person had two souls. The soul known as Ba is the one that progressed into the afterlife while the Ka remains with the mummy. The Ka is believed to live a magical life within the grave. Thus the Egyptians placed miniature belongings of the deceased into the tomb. Such items as images, statuettes, imitation utensils, and miniature houses take the place of the real thing. They believed that the Ka would use these as the real item because the mortuary priests possessed magic that would make them real for the dead.

The priests believed that the gods could be deceived, menaced and forced into obedience. They had such trust in the power of magic, the virtue of the spoken word, the irresistibility of magic gestures and other ritual, that they hoped to bend even the good gods to their will. They would bring retribution to the deities who failed to deal leniently with the dead. They threatened to shoot lightning into the are of Shu, god of the air, who would then no longer be able to support the sky-goddess, and her star-sown body would collapse, disrupting the order of all things.

When Ikhnaton overthrew the Egyptian gods and demons, making the cult of the One God Aton, a state religion, he also suppressed mortuary magic. Ikhnaton did not believe in life after death.

As Christianity became a part of this nation, there is much evidence to show where the Christians of the time, and the pagans lived peacefully together.

In theology, the differences between early Christians, Gnostics (members - often Christian - of dualistic sects of the 2nd century AD.), and pagan Hermeticists were slight. In the large Gnostic library discovered at Naj'Hammadi, in upper Egypt, in 1945, Hermetic writings were found side by side with Christian Gnostic texts. The doctrine of the soul taught in Gnostic communities was almost identical to that taught in the mysteries: the soul emanated from the Father, fell into the body, and had to return to its former home.

It was not until later in Rome that things took a change for the worse. Which moves us on to Greece.

The doctrinal similarity is exemplified in the case of the pagan writer and philosopher Synesius. When the people of Cyrene wanted the most able man of the city to be their bishop, they chose Synesius, a pagan. He was able to accept the election without sacrificing his intellectual honesty. In his pagan period, he wrote hymns that follow the fire theology of the Chaldean Oracles. Later he wrote hymns to Christ. The doctrine is almost identical.

To attempt to demonstrate this...let's go to some BASIC tenets and beliefs of the two religions:

Christian Beliefs

The 10 Commandments

1.) You shall have no other gods before me.

To the Christian, this means there will be no other God. Yet, in the bible, the phrase is plural. I does not state that you will not have another god, it says that you will have no other gods before the Christian God.

In the case of the later, it could be interpreted to mean that whereas other gods can be recognized, as a Christian, this person should place YHVH ahead of all gods recognizing him/her as the supreme being of all.

2.) You shall not worship idols

Actually, what it says in the New International Version is "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love me and keep my commandments.

3.) You shall not take the name of the lord in vain.

This one is pretty self explanatory. When a person is calling on the lord he/she is asking the lord for guidance or action. Thus, the phrase "God damn it!" can be translated into a person asking the lord to condemn whatever "it" is to hell. The phrase "To damn" means to condemn to hell. In modern society, several phrases such as the following are common usage: "Oh God!", "God forbid!", "God damn it!", "God have mercy!" Each of these is asking God to perform some act upon or for the speaker with the exception of "Oh God!" which is asking for Gods attention.

4.) Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

Depending on which religion you are looking at (i.e. Jewish, from which the 10 commandments come; or Christianity, which adapted them for their use as well.) the Sabbath is either Saturday or Sunday. You may also take a look at the various mythological pantheons to correlate which is the first and last days of the week...(i.e. Sun - Sunday.. Genesis 1:3 "And God said, "Let there be light,' and there was light., Moon - Monday.. Genesis 1:14 "And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 16 God made two great lights - the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars." Thus the Sun was created first. With the day of the Sun being the first in the week, then Saturday would be the 7th or Sabbath.

5.) Honor thy mother and thy father.

This is another that is fairly self explanatory. It is any parent's right after spending the time to raise you to expect that you respect them.

6.) You shall not murder.

This does not say "You shall not murder...except in my name." It says YOU SHALL NOT MURDER. PERIOD. Out of the 10 commandments, I have found that over the course of history, this one has been the most ignored. As we look as the spread of Christianity from around 300 AD forward, we find that as politics moved into the church and those in charge of man's "souls" were given more control that this one commandment sort of went out the window.

We see such things as the Crusades, the inquisition, and the dominating fear that was placed into the Christian "psyche" that one should destroy that which is not like you.

Even though we here stories about the "witch trials", and the "witch burnings" etc...There were actually very few "Witches" tried or burned. Most of these poor souls were that of Protestant beliefs (Against the Catholic Church) yet still maintained that they were Christians. But...more on this later.

7.) You shall not commit adultery.

You can look up the meaning in the dictionary, and this one becomes pretty self-evident. What it comes down to is that no person who has ever been divorced can marry again, and you don't have sex with someone that you are not married to.

8.) You shall not steal.

Again, enough said. However...don't go looking at Constantine to be obeying this one! The Pagan temples were looted to make his coinage.

9.) You shall not give false witness against thy neighbor

Again, during the times of the inquisition, this also went out the window. Such tools as torture were used to pull confessions from these poor people who then signed statements that the inquisitors had written up saying that they freely signed this document. Of course...the inquisitors stated that this person was not tortured, but it was his clever wit that had extracted this confession.

It was also during this time that persons, refusing to take responsibility for their own actions or accept that nature does in fact create strange circumstances...(i.e. drought, flood, etc.) and the resulting illness and bug infestations. Very often, as the Witch-craze developed stronger, the one neighbor would accuse another of Witchcraft and destroying the fields or making their child sick, or whatever.

10.)You shall not covet your neighbor.

On the surface, this one is pretty self explanatory. Don't crave your neighbor's possessions. Yes...I can relate this back to the inquisitional times as well since most of the accused's property reverted back to the Catholic church at this time...there were several accused and convicted of Witchcraft simply because they would not sell their property to the church. However...How does this effect persons today? How far do we carry the "Thou shalt not covet..."? This can be even so much as a want, however is it a sin to want a toy like your neighbor has? If so...we're all in trouble. How many of us "want" that Porsche that we see driving down the road? Or how about that beautiful house that we just drove past? Do we carry this commandment to this extreme? If so...I pity the person that can live by it for what that would say is "Thou shalt not DREAM."

Wiccan Beliefs

Since the religion of Wicca (or Witchcraft) is so diverse in it's beliefs, I have included several documents here that encompass the majority of the traditions involved. Again, this is simply a basis...NOT the be all and end all.

> Wiccan Rede

Bide ye Wiccan laws you must,
in perfect love and perfect trust
Live ye must and let to live,
fairly take and fairly give
For the circle thrice about
to keep unwelcome spirits out
To bind ye spell well every time,
let the spell be spake in rhyme
Soft of eye and light of touch,
speak ye little, listen much
Deosil go by the waxing moon,
chanting out ye baleful tune
When ye Lady's moon is new,
kiss ye hand to her times two
When ye moon rides at her peak,
then ye heart's desire seek
Heed the north winds mighty gale,
lock the door and trim the sail
When the wind comes from the south,
love will kiss thee on the mouth
When the wind blows from the east,
expect the new and set the feast.
Nine woods in the cauldron go,
burn them fast and burn them slow
Elder be ye Lady's tree,
burn it not or cursed ye'll be
When the wheel begins to turn,
soon ye Beltane fires will burn
When the wheel hath turned a Yule
light the log the Horned One rules
Heed ye flower, bush and tree,
by the Lady blessed be
Where the rippling waters go,
cast a stone, the truth ye'll know
When ye have and hold a need,
harken not to others greed
With a fool no season spend,
or be counted as his friend

> Merry meet and merry part,
> bright the cheeks and warm the heart.
> Mind ye threefold law ye should
> three times bad and three times good
> When misfortune is enow,
> wear the star upon thy brow
> True in love my ye ever be,
> lest thy love be false to thee
> These eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfill;
> An harm ye none, do what ye will.

One of the Pagan Oaths recognized nationally here in the U.S.

A Pledge to Pagan Spirituality

- I am a Pagan and I dedicate Myself to channeling the Spiritual Energy of my Inner Self to help and to heal myself and others.
- I know that I am a part of the Whole of Nature. May I grow in understanding of the Unity of all Nature. May I always walk in Balance.
- May I always be mindful of the diversity of Nature as well as its Unity and may I always be tolerant of those whose race, appearance, sex, sexual preference, culture, and other ways differ from my own.
- May I use the Force (psychic power) wisely and never use it for aggression nor for malevolent purposes. May I never direct it to curtail the free will of another.
- May I always be mindful that I create my own reality and that I have the power within me to create positivity in my life.
- May I always act in honorable ways: being honest with myself and others, keeping my word whenever I have given it, fulfilling all responsibilities and commitments I have taken on to the best of my ability.
- May I always remember that whatever is sent out always returns magnified to the sender. May the Forces of Karma move swiftly to remind me of these spiritual commitments when I have begin to falter from them, and may I use this Karmic feedback to help myself grow and be more attuned to my Inner Pagan Spirit.
- May I always remain strong and committed to my Spiritual ideals in the face of adversity and negativity. May the Force of my Inner Spirit ground out all malevolence directed my way and transform it into positivity. May my Inner Light shine so strongly that malevolent forces can not even approach my sphere of existence.
- May I always grow in Inner Wisdom & Understanding. May I see every problem that I face as an opportunity to develop myself spiritually in solving it.
- May I always act out of Love to all other beings on this Planet - to other humans, to plants, to animals, to minerals, to elementals, to spirits, and to other entities.
- May I always be mindful that the Goddess and God in all their forms dwell within me and that this divinity is reflected through my own Inner Self, my Pagan Spirit.
- May I always channel Love and Light from my being. May my Inner Spirit, rather than my ego self, guide all my thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- So mote it be

In the Wiccan Rede above, and scattered in the oath, we find words such as Perfect Love and Perfect Trust. What are these strange words and what do they mean?

Before one can analyze the meaning behind the phrase "Perfect Love and Perfect Trust", one must first define the words. For this purpose, I will use the Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language 1982 edition. Perfect: adj. [L. per-, through + facere, do] 1. complete in all respects; flawless 2. excellent, as in skill or quality 3. completely accurate 4. sheer; utter [a perfect fool] 5. Gram. expressing a state or action completed at the time of speaking - vt. 1. to complete 2. to make perfect or nearly perfect - n. 1. the perfect tense 2. a verb form in this tense - perfectly adv - perfectness n.

> Love: n. [<OE. lufu] 1. strong affection or liking of someone or something. 2. a passionate affection for one of the opposite sex. 3. The object of such affection, sweetheart.

> Trust: n.[ON, traust] 1. a) firm belief in the honesty, reliability, etc. of another; faith b) the one trusted 2. confident expectation, hope, etc. 3. responsibility resulting from confidence placed in one. 4. Care, custody 5. something entrusted to one...

Using these definitions, we come up with "Flawless strong affection and flawless faith.

Is this possible? Those that follow the religion of Wicca often give excuses for this just being words. When this is the case, they are not obeying their faith...thus...they are not following perfect love and perfect trust. But to the rest...the answer is a resounding YES. This does not ask that you "like" a person. It asks that you see the divine light and love within individual whether you like them or not. Can this be done...YES. As to the perfect trust...we can always trust a fox to be a fox right. Therefore, when we are entering circle, we can honestly answer perfect trust even if it is on shaky ground. We may have faith that this person will act like any other human.

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Greek life was characterized by such things as democratic institutions, seafaring, athletics theater and philosophy. The mystery religions adopted many expressions from these domains. The word for their assembly was Ekklesia of the mystai. They spoke of the voyage of life, the ship, the anchor and the port of religion, and the wreath of the initiate. The Christians took over the entire terminology, but had to twist many pagan words in order to fit into the Christian world. The term Leitourgia (meaning service of the state) became the ritual or liturgy of the church. The decree of the assembly and the opinions of the philosophers (dogma) became the fixed doctrine of Christianity. The term for "the correct opinion" (or the doxa) became orthodoxy.

The mysteries declined quickly when the emperor Constantine raised Christianity to the status of the state religion. After a short period of toleration, the pagan religions were prohibited. The property of the pagan gods was confiscated, and the temples were destroyed. The metal from which Constantine's gold pieces were coined was taken from the pagan temple treasuries.

The main pagan "strong holds" were Rome and Alexandria. In Rome, the old aristocracy clung to the mysteries and in Alexandria the pagan Neoplatonist philosophers expounded the mystery doctrines. In 394, the opposition of the Roman aristocracy was crushed in the battle at the Frigidus River (modern stream of Vipacco, Italy and stream of Vipava, Yugoslavia).

According to the Christian theologian Origen, Christianity's development during the time of the Roman Empire was part of the divine plan. The whole Mediterranean world was united by the Romans, and the conditions for missionary work were more favorable than ever before. He explains the similarities as natural considering the cultures etc. The mystery religions and Christianity had many features in common. Some examples of this are found in their time of preparation prior to initiation, and periods of fasting. Their were pilgrimages, and new names for the new brethren. Few of the early Christian "congregations" would be called orthodox according to later more modern standards.

Though for many years, the pagan "churches" of this area tried to bring about a unity among their "doctrines", beliefs, and practices to raise support for their practices, the Christian philosophies and doctrines were so organized and strong that this fell as well. Little did they know that a couple hundred miles away, peoples were still worshipping in pagan temples.

Let's take a look up north.

The worship of trees goes far back into the history of man. It was not until Christianity converted the Lithuanians toward the close of the 14th century that tree worship was thought to be in the past. The truth is...whereas they are not worshipped, they are still honored by society today in the burning of the Yule log, May Day bon-fires, Kissing under the Mistletoe, and the ever famous Christmas tree.

The worship of the oak tree or god appears to have been universal by all branches of the Aryan stock in Europe. Both Greeks and Italians associated the tree with their highest god, Zeus or Jupiter, the divinity of the sky, the rain, and the thunder. Possibly one of the oldest and most famous sanctuaries in Greece was that of Dodona, where Zeus was revered in the oracular oak. The thunderstorms which are said to rage at Dodona more frequently than anywhere else in Europe, would render the spot a fitting home for the god whose voice was heard alike in the rustling of the oak leaves and in the crash of thunder. Zeus of Greece, and Jupiter of Italy both were gods of thunder and rain, and to both the oak tree were sacred.

To the Celts, or Druids, their worship was conducted in oak groves. The Celtic conquerors, who settled in Asia in the third century BC., appear to have carried with them the worship of the oak to their new home. In the heart of Asia Minor, the Galatian senate met in a place which bore the Celtic name of Drynemetum, "the sacred oak grove" or "the temple of the oak."

In Germany, we find that the veneration for sacred groves seems to have held the foremost place. According to Grimm, the chief of their holy trees was the oak. Again, here we find that it is dedicated to the god of thunder, Donar or Thunar, the equivalent of the Norse Thor. Among the Slavs, the oak tree was sacred to the thunder god Perun. Among the Lithuanians, the oak tree was sacred to Perkunas or Perkuns, the god of thunder and rain.

The Christmas tree, usually a balsam or Douglas fir, was decorated with lights and ornaments as a part of Christmas festivities. The use of evergreen trees, wreaths, and garlands as a symbol of eternal life was an old custom of the Egyptians,

Chinese, and Hebrews. Tree worship, common among the pagan Europeans, survived after their conversion to Christianity in the Scandinavian customs of decorating the house and barn with evergreens at the New Year to scare away the devil and of setting up a tree for the birds during Christmastide. It survived in the custom observed in Germany, of placing a Yule tree inside the house in the midwinter holidays.

The modern Christmas tree originated in Western Germany. The main prop of a popular medieval play about Adam and Eve was a fir tree hung with apples (the tree of Paradise) representing the Garden of Eden. The Germans set up the Paradise tree in their homes on December 24, the religious feast day of Adam and Eve. They hung wafers on it (symbolizing the host, the Christian sigh of redemption). In later tradition, the wafers were replaced by cookies of various shapes. Candles were often added as the symbol of Christ, though they were also a pagan symbol for the light of the God.

As we can see, even though the pagan community has been trod upon, it was never destroyed. The date of Christmas was purposely fixed on December 25 to push into the background the great festival of the sun god, and the Epiphany on January 5 to supplant an Egyptian festival of the same day and the Easter ceremonies were set to rival the pagan spring festival.

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Easter

On Easter Sunday, everywhere, the children hunt the many colored Easter eggs, brought by the Easter rabbit. This is the vestige of a fertility rite, the eggs and the rabbit both symbolizing fertility. The rabbit was the escort of the Germanic goddess Ostara who gave her name to the festival by way of the German Ostern.

The first day of Spring holds much in the way of folklore. It is also known as the Spring Equinox, Ostara, Eostre's Day, Alban Eilir, the Vernal Equinox, or Festival of the Trees. It takes place between March 19 and 22. It marks the first day of true spring (verses the balmy weather that may precede it.)

The day and night is equal on this day, thus the name of Equinox. There is a story in one culture that says that the sun has begun to win it's race with the night and that the days get longer as the sun pulls ahead. (Followed by the fact that the sun begins to lose the race at Mid-Summer, and loses the race at Mid-Winter just to start the race again the next day.)

It is a time of beginnings, of action, of planting seeds for future grains, and of tending gardens. On the first Sunday after the first full moon following Eostre's Day (the name from which the Easter was derived), the Christian religion celebrates it's Easter Day.

Spring is a time of the Earth's renewal, a rousing of nature after the cold sleep of winter. As such, it is an ideal time to clean your home to welcome the new season.

Spring cleaning is more than physical work. Some cultures see it as a concentrated effort on their part to rid themselves of problems and negativity of the past months and they prepare themselves for the coming spring and summer.

To do this, they approach the task of cleaning their homes with positive thoughts. They believe that this frees the homes of the hard feelings brought about by a harsh winter. Even then, they have guidelines that they follow such as any scrubbing of stains or hand rubbing the floors should be done in a "clockwise" motion. It is their belief that this aids in filling the home with good energy for growth.

To the Druidic faith, this is a sacred day occurring in the month of Fearn (meaning, "I am the shining tear of the Sun"). Part of their practices are to clean and rededicate outdoor shrines, believing that in doing so they honor the spring maiden. This is a time of fertility of both crops and families. In promoting crops, they believe that the use of fire and water (the sun and rain) will reanimate all life on Earth. They decorate hard- boiled eggs, the symbol of rebirth, to eat during their rites, and such foods as honey cakes and milk punch can also be found. The mothers and daughters give dinners for each other and give cards and gifts as a way of merging with the natural flow of life and with each other. (The Druids consider this also as Mother's Day.)

In Greek mythology, spring was the time when Persephone returned from the underworld (where the seed was planted in the barren winter months) and thus represents the seedlings of the spring. Demeter, Persephone's mother represents the fertile earth and the ripened grain of harvest since it is alleged that she is the one that created the need to harvest crops when her daughter was kidnapped and taken to the underworld. It was through an arrangement that her daughter could return for 1/2 the year that Demeter allowed the crops to spring forth for that time until she again went into mourning for her daughter in the fall.

In some cultures, even today, the ones that continue to celebrate the rites of spring rise on Easter morning to watch the sun "Dance" as it rises.

The Christian festival commemorating the resurrection of Christ, synchronized with the Jewish Pesach, and blended since the earliest days of Christianity with pagan European rites for the renewed season. In all countries Easter falls on the Sunday after the first full moon on or following March 21. It is preceded by a period of riotous vegetation rites and by a period of abstinence, Lent (in Spain Cuaresma, Germany Lenz, central Italy, Quaresima) and by special rites of Holy Week.

Everywhere Easter Sunday is welcomed with rejoicing, singing, candle processionals, flowers in abundance, and ringing of church bells. Many pagan customs survive, such as the lighting of new fires at dawn, among the Maya as well as in Europe, for cure, renewed life, and protection of the crops.

May Day

The first day of May: observed as a spring festival everywhere in Europe, the United States, and Canada, and as a labor festival in certain European countries.

Rites such as the ever famous May Pole occur in the town squares or in the family's front yard. The gathering of green branches and flowers on May Eve is the symbolic act of bringing home the May, i.e. bringing new life, the spring, into the village.

The May Queen (and often King) is chosen from among the young people, and they go singing from door to door throughout the town carrying flowers or the May tree, soliciting donations for a merrymaking in return for the "blessing of May". This is symbolic of bestowing and sharing of the new creative power that is stirring in the world. As the kids go from door to door, the May Bride often sings to the effect that those who give will get of nature's bounty through the year.

In parts of France, some jilted youth will lie in a field on May Day and pretend to sleep. If any village girl is willing to marry him, she goes and wakes him with a kiss; the pair then go to the village inn together and lead the dance which announces their engagement. The boy is called "the betrothed of May."

This festival is also known as Beltane, the Celtic May Day. It officially begins at moonrise on May Day Eve, and marks the beginning of the third quarter or second half of the ancient Celtic year. It is celebrated as an early pastoral festival accompanying the first turning of the herds out to wild pasture. The rituals were held to promote fertility. The cattle were driven between the Belfires to protect them from ills. Contact with the fire was interpreted as symbolic contact with the sun.

The rowan branch is hung over the house fire on May Day to preserve the fire itself from bewitchment (the house fire being symbolic of the luck of the house.

In early Celtic times, the druids kindled the Beltane fires with specific incantations. Later the Christian church took over the Beltane observances, a service was held in the church, followed by a procession to the fields or hills, where the priest kindled the fire.

In some rituals, a King and Queen May symbolize the male and female principles of productivity.

We have looked briefly at the similarities of the philosophies and vocabularies, but is that all that they had in common? Let's look at symbologies.

For many years, the cross has been the symbol representing the death of the Christian Christ. It has represented that through his death, man could be reborn into God's grace. Thus, we have the philosophy of life in death being connected to the cross. Is this the only time where this symbol was recognized as such? Let's go back to Egypt and find out.

An upright piece of wood, tied to a horizontal beam indicated the height of the flood waters on the Nile. This beam formed a cross. If the waters failed to rise during the season of planting, it meant a poor harvest for these people. Thus the cross was revered as a symbol of life and regeneration.

The Ankh represents the genitals of both sexes. The cross itself is a primitive form of the phallus, and the loop that of the womb. Again, we continue the symbol of the cross as the giver of life.

Oh my gosh...did I use the word phallus in connection with the cross? Oops!

Yes...even prior to this time was the cross a symbol of the phallus or fertility. This is not the only thing that the phallus has symbolized over the many centuries within and without the pagan world. It has also been used as a symbol of strength.

Within the Bible, we find several references to the horn also as a symbol of strength.

- 2 Samuel 22:3 - He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation.
- Luke 1:69 - And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us.
- Psalm 18:2 - He is my shield and the horn of my salvation.
- The move from horn to helmet is followed up also in the bible as follows:
- Isaiah 59:17 - For he put an helmet of salvation upon his head.
- Ephesians 6:17 - Take the helmet of salvation.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:8 -...putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

In Roman days a warrior would were horns on his helmet. If he came back defeated, he was said to have been de-horned. There are several references where a soldier who lost his helmet on the field was killed for this offense because it meant dishonor for him to loose his horn.

Shakespeare had much knowledge of the use of horns as a symbol of protection and victory as is evident in his works "As You Like It" (IV,2) and in "Measure for Measure" (II,4:16) when he writes: "Let's write good angell on the devill's horne; tis not the devill's crest."

Even in modern days, the Catholic Church uses this symbol when setting the mitre upon the head of a newly consecrated bishop. The words used at such a time are: "We set on the head of this Bishop, O Lord, Thy champion, the helmet of defense and of salvation, that with comely face and with his head armed with the horns of either Testament he may appear terrible to the gainsayers of the truth, and may become their vigorous assailant, through the abundant gift of Thy grace, who didst make the face of Thy servant Moses to shine after familiar converse with Thee, and didst adorn it with the resplendent horns of Thy brightness and Thy truth and commandedst the mitre to be set on the head of Aaron, Thy high priest, Etc..." (Copies in Latin and translated can be found in The Order Consecration of a Bishop Elect with the imprimatur of H. Card. Vaughn, p. 14, Burns and Oates, 1893.)

If we are looking at protections and the like, we must look at the use of stones and crystals within our lives. Yes, even in the Christian bible, the powers and uses of stones is mentioned. Exodus 28:15-21 - "Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions - the work of a skilled craftsman. Make it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. It is to be square - a span (9 inches) wide - and folded double. Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; in the second row a

turquoise, a sapphire (or lapis lazuli) and an emerald; in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. There are to be twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes."

Exodus 28:9-14 - Take two onyx stones and engrave on the names of the sons of Israel in the order of their birth - six names on one stone and the remaining six on the other. Engrave the names of the sons of Israel on the two stones the way a gem cutter engraves a seal. Then mount the stones in gold filigree settings and fasten them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. Aaron is to bear the names on his shoulders as a memorial before the Lord. Make gold filigree settings and two braided chains of pure gold, like a rope, and attach the chains to the settings.

Though it does not say as much, we might take the engraving as a form of runes, again creating a similarity between the craft and religions of old.

From man's search for protection, we come to the telling by the stars...Astrology, and the use of stars as protectors of man.

The lore behind the star of David is an interesting tale. The easy interpretation is that of Zionism. The more research you do on this though, you will find that once again, depending on the cultures you look at, it's interpretation changes. The six- pointed star formed by the superimposing of one triangle on another. The symbol is a combination of the male (apex upwards) and female (apex downwards) triangles; it is said, in cabalistic writings, to comprise the signs of the four elements and the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, and thus it came to be the symbol for God. Since the Biblical commandment puts a taboo on the use of the Name of God and on the depiction of God, the symbol was inscribed as the graphic representation of God in synagogues and wherever the Name was appropriate. In alchemy, the star of David combined the symbols for fire and water; hence, it meant distillation. Until recently, therefore, it appeared on shops selling brandy. The star of David is the symbol of Zionism and appears on the flag of Israel. As Solomon's seal, the hexagram possessed power to control demons of all kinds. The stopper on the bottle containing the bottle imp or jinni was stamped with the seal of Solomon. In the Nsibidi script of West Africa, a native form of writing, the symbol means ardent love; the universality of the male-female content of the sign is here apparent.

Astrology also has interesting roots. Though the word itself is made up of the Greek words meaning "star logic" (astra - star, Logos - logic), the actual origin is yet to be determined. We read in the Epic of Creation of Sumer - Akkad, or Early Babylon (ca 2200-1900 BC) that: "The Star - Jupiter who brings prophecies to all is my Lord. My Lord be at peace. The Star - Mercury allows rain to fall. The Star - Saturn, the star of Law and Justice..."

The telling of fortunes by the stars underwent an avid growth spurt during the times of the Roman Empire, and though with minor qualms with the Christian church, it co-existed peacefully until the time of Constantine when all "pagan" activities were outlawed. Though outlawed within the Roman Empire, Astrology continued to thrive within the Middle East.

I realize that I said that I would touch on the inquisition and such, however, I think that it is common knowledge the document used to persecute those involved was written by the Friars within the Catholic Church at the time. The document, The Malleus Maleficarum, was a document designed to bring about fear within the Christian community, and more power to the church. What is not widely realized is that the majority of the persons that were either burned, drowned, or hung were not witches, but Protestants within the Christian church. (The ones that were Protesting the Catholic church.)

I realize that, at this time, this is a rather sketchy document. I hope in the near future to be able to take the time to develop more of the depth that I would like to put into bring up our roots. I hope to include in the expanded edition the times of burning, modern witchcraft, more symbols, and famous persons in the craft.

We've changed...but then as a good friend has told me on more than one occasion..."When we cease to change, we cease to grow. When we cease to grow, life ends."

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